

(**Washington D.C.**) - Today, Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott joined a majority of his colleagues in voting for H.R. 1591, the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007," the centerpiece of which sets conditions for the redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. H.R. 1591 passed the House by a vote of 218 to 212 (Roll Call No. 186).

"There is no doubt that the conflict in Iraq is now a civil war marked primarily by sectarian violence, pitting Sunnis against Shias, with our troops caught in between," said Rep. Scott. "This bill is in fact the most responsible means to get our men and women out of this quagmire."

The legislation does not call for an immediate withdrawal. Instead, the legislation gives Iraq's government a timeline to achieve political and military progress already set by President Bush and Iraqi leaders. If Iraq's government fails to meet the benchmarks outlined in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by March 2008. If the benchmarks are met by the deadlines established in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by September 2008. In doing this, the legislation creates leverage that the U.S. can use to hold Iraq's government accountable and make it ultimately responsible for creating a political solution to this conflict that will result in American troops coming home.

"I acknowledge that Congress should generally avoid trying to micro-manage a war. When decisions need to be made, there is no time for committee hearings or floor votes; the Commander-in-Chief may need to act immediately," Rep. Scott said. "However, this Administration, contrary to the facts of the situation on the ground, continues to claim that success is around the corner. My Virginia colleague in the Senate, Republican Senator John Warner, has stated that 'in two or three months if this thing hasn't come to fruition and this level of violence is not under control' then we would need to rethink our policy – he made that statement six months ago.

"Some have suggested that any deadline is problematic. However, the Administration's original time estimate for the war was 'six days, six weeks, no more than six months,' so a firm deadline 18 months from now, after four years of this open ended conflict, cannot create any more problems than we already have and in fact sets a date that begins to bring our troops home.

"Today's legislation, for the first time in the four year history of this conflict, finally puts real pressure on the President and Iraq's leaders to bring this war to an end. This bill will begin a responsible process to remove our forces from Iraq," concluded Rep. Scott.

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Foreign Policy Experts Support H.R. 1591:

Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has stated that "only a political solution will end this war," and that the plan approved by the House today provides "a means to hold the Iraqi government accountable for its performance by conditioning U.S. support to the meeting of benchmarks already endorsed by President Bush and Iraqi leaders."

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright recently stated, "the bottom line is that there must be a political settlement in Iraq that will end the civil war and reduce the level of insecurity to something that can be managed. With a settlement, we could withdraw gradually, with mission accomplished. Without a settlement, our troops can do little good and might as well come home sooner rather than later."

In a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey, former Congressman, 9/11 Commissioner and co-chair of the Iraq Study Group, Lee Hamilton said that "a strategy of sustained pressure on the Iraqi government to meet benchmarks on national reconciliation, security, and improving the lives of the Iraqi people – backed by clear conditionality of U.S. support – has the best chance of advancing stability in Iraq." Congressman Hamilton added under the House proposal, "the President retains his flexibility and authority as commander-in-chief."

High Ranking Military Officials have questioned our current policy in Iraq:

Former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Gen. Wesley Clark (Ret.), former President of the National Defense University Lt. Gen. Robert G. Gard, Jr. (Ret.), former Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, current Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, and First Head of Training of Troops in Iraq Maj. Gen Paul Eaton (Ret.), have all pointed out that the solution in Iraq is primarily political, diplomatic and economic.

In an open letter to Congress, several retired generals and other high ranking military officials stated that the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating" and that top military officials have "consistently acknowledged that the repeated and lengthy deployments are straining" the U.S. military.

General David Petraeus, the new Commander of Multinational Force Iraq, recently declared that "there is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq."

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